



Independent conditional clauses in Germanic: Functional range, influence of ‘source’ semantics and grammatical status

Sarah D’Hertefelt
University of Leuven

Coordination/Subordination in Lisbon
May 8, 2014

Introduction: independent conditional clauses

ICCs:

- constructions marked as subordinate (conditional subordinator, word order) but used without (immediately) accompanying main clause ('insubordination', cf. Evans 2007) → challenge to 'traditional' subordinate / main clause distinction
- can express different meanings: request, evaluation, ...

(1) *Det er godt nok lidt tid siden jeg har spillet spillet [sic],*

<i>så</i>	<i>hvis</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>kort</i>	<i>kan</i>	<i>fortælle</i>	<i>hvad</i>	<i>reglerne</i>	<i>er?</i>
so	COND	you	briefly	can.PRS	tell.INF	what	rules	be.PRS
								DANISH, IC

'It has been a while since I've played this game, **so if you can briefly tell me what the rules are?**'

(2) PEARL: *[disdainfully] I was only tellin' you how the whole thing looked to me.*

If a person can't pass an opinion...

ENGLISH, Stirling 1998: 277

OLIVE: *You pass too many damned opinions, that's your trouble.*

Introduction: independent conditional clauses (2)

Aims of this presentation:

- Assess **functional range** (based on semantic parameters + formal evidence)
- Investigate **influence of 'source' semantics**: why are these meanings expressed with conditional clauses?
- Assess **grammatical status**: all instances of the same phenomenon?

Data and literature

- Languages covered: Dutch, German, English, Danish, Swedish, Icelandic
- Data:
 - spoken corpora (see references)
 - personal corpus of internet material (IC)
 - additional work with native speakers (Danish, Swedish, Icelandic)

Introduction: independent conditional clauses (3)

- Literature:

DUTCH Boogaart & Verheij 2013, ENGLISH Adriaensen 2010, Stirling 1998, Fillenbaum 1986, DANISH Hansen & Heltoft 2011, SWEDISH Laury, Lindholm & Lindström 2013, Lindström MS, Telemann et al. 2010, GERMAN Auer 1996, Günthner 1999a, Oppenrieder 1989, Weuster 1983

Descriptive overview of ICCs in Germanic languages

1. Deontic ICCs
2. Evaluative ICCs
3. Argumentative ICCs
4. Conditional questions
- (5. Modification of preceding discourse)
6. 'Rhetorical' ICCs

Descriptive overview of ICCs in Germanic languages

1. Deontic ICCs

2. Evaluative ICCs

3. Argumentative ICCs

4. Conditional questions

(5. Modification of preceding discourse)

6. 'Rhetorical' ICCs

1. Deontic ICCs

Semantics:

- Construction refers to potential state of affairs (SoA), typically located in the future
- Speaker evaluates p in terms of desirability
- Subtypes: wish, request, threat

(3) *Er lebte, so viel wüsste sie, aber er konnte noch nicht nach Hause kommen.*

„Wenn er nur kommt, wenn er nur bald kommt!“ GERMAN, IC

COND he PRT come.PRS cond he PRT PRT come.PRS

‘He was alive, that much she knew, but he couldn’t come home yet. “**If only he comes, if only he comes soon!**”’

(4) *If you could open the window?*

ENGLISH, IC

1. Deontic ICCs (2)

(5) *Hvað ert þú eiginlega að gera þarna á grafreitnum okkar?*

Ef þú dirfist að snerta hauginn hans afa míns ...

COND you dare.PST.SUBJ INFM touch.INF grave his grandfather mine

ICELANDIC, IC

‘What are you doing over there on our burial ground? **If you dare to touch my grandfather's grave...**’

Formal:

- wishes: particle ‘only’
- requests: modal verbs, particles ‘maybe’, ‘briefly’
- threats: scalar markers, action-initiating verbs

Descriptive overview of ICCs in Germanic languages

1. Deontic ICCs

2. Evaluative ICCs

3. Argumentative ICCs

4. Conditional questions

(5. Modification of preceding discourse)

6. 'Rhetorical' ICCs

2. Evaluative ICCs

Semantics:

- construction refers to potential or 'newly learnt' SoA
- SoA evaluated by speaker in terms of 'likeability' / 'agreement'

(6) *PS: Nu nog meer bewondering gekregen voor die veldrijders =D> . Da zijn geen gewone bultjes op parcours superprestige zulle :-? .* **Amai** **als** **ge**

INTERJ

COND

you

daar **een** **uur** **op** **moet** **crossen** #-o . DUTCH, IC

there an hour on have.to.PRS ride.INF

'PS: Now I admire those cyclo-cross riders even more. Those are no normal bumps on the superprestige track. **Wow if you have to ride [on that track] for an hour...**'

(7) *[title of a review of a Dutch restaurant]*

If this is supposed to be good, 'authentic' Dutch food....

ENGLISH, IC

Descriptive overview of ICCs in Germanic languages

1. Deontic ICCs

2. Evaluative ICCs

3. Argumentative ICCs

4. Conditional questions

(5. Modification of preceding discourse)

6. 'Rhetorical' ICCs

3. Argumentative ICCs

Semantics:

- construction refers to 'given' or 'newly learnt' information
- construction functions as an argument in favour of or against previously mentioned SoA
- subtypes: direct arguments, indirect arguments

(8) *[context: conversation about pensioners trying to earn some extra money by carrying people's groceries to their cars]*

A: *alsof je zelf je boodschappen niet kunt dragen.*

maar ja als 't hun inkomen is ...

but yes COND it their income be.PRS

B: *ja.*

DUTCH, CGN

'A: as if you can't carry your groceries yourself

but if it's their income...

B: yes'

3. Argumentative ICCs (2)

(9) A: *ja maar 'k denk dat ze wel weer kwaad was gisteren.*

B: *ja maar hij heeft dat toch niet veel gedaan.
weekend.*

als dat nu elke week zou zijn dat hij de
COND that PRT each week would.PRS be.INF COMP he the
zaterdag de zondag moet werken en zo.
Saturday the Sunday have.to.PRS work.INF and so

A: *nee nee dat is uh... hm.*

DUTCH, CGN

'A: *yeah but I think she was mad again yesterday*

B: *yes but it's not like he's done that a lot.
weekend.*

if he had to work weekends every week [I would understand her anger]

A: *no no that's erm'*

Descriptive overview of ICCs in Germanic languages

1. Deontic ICCs

2. Evaluative ICCs

3. Argumentative ICCs

4. Conditional questions

(5. Modification of preceding discourse)

6. 'Rhetorical' ICCs

4. Conditional questions

Semantics:

- construction refers to potential SoA
- hearer is invited to discuss possible consequences: uptake expected

(10) *Zahnlückes Lachen bricht jäh ab, als der Kleine wieder fragt:*

"Und wenn er doch kommt?"

and COND he PRT come.PRS

"Dann nehmen wir ihn auseinander, Pfannkuchen."

GERMAN, IC

‘Tooth gap stops laughing, as the small one asks again: **“And if he does come?”** “Then we’ll take him apart, Pancake”.’

Formal: *if* can be replaced by *what if*

Descriptive overview of ICCs in Germanic languages

1. Deontic ICCs
2. Evaluative ICCs
3. Argumentative ICCs
4. Conditional questions
- (5. Modification of preceding discourse)**
6. 'Rhetorical' ICCs

(5. Modification of preceding discourse)

Semantics:

- construction describes condition for SoA described in preceding utterance
- not independent, functions as increment

(11) *[discussion about possible closing of nuclear power plants]*

Openhouden? Ja, als het niet anders kan DUTCH, IC

open.keep.INF yes COND it NEG otherwise can.PRS

‘Keep them [i.e. nuclear power plants] open? Yes, **if there’s no other option.**’

Descriptive overview of ICCs in Germanic languages

1. Deontic ICCs

2. Evaluative ICCs

3. Argumentative ICCs

4. Conditional questions

(5. Modification of preceding discourse)

6. 'Rhetorical' ICCs

6. ‘Rhetorical’ ICCs (?)

(12) *Wenn das kein Beweis ist für die Midlife Crisis* GERMAN, IC
COND that no proof be.PRS for the midlife crisis
‘If that isn’t proof for the Midlife crisis!’

(13) *Als er hier nu één iemand is die haat predikt...*
COND there here PRT one someone be.PRS REL hate preach.PRS DUTCH, IC
‘If there’s anyone preaching hatred here [it’s you]’

Pragmatics:

- construction used to emphatically ‘assert’ identification / predication

BUT how does this relate to the **semantics** of these constructions?

Influence of ‘source’ semantics and grammatical status

Conditionality (cf. Dancygier 1998)

- non-assertion of p : ‘epistemic distance’
- (preposed conditionals: orientation towards consequent q)

→ ‘basic’ conditional properties still present in independent uses, restrict meanings these constructions can express

Grammatical status

At first sight: all ICCs instances of ‘insubordination’ (Evans 2007: 367):

“the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses”

BUT insubordination implies:

- construction has to be interpretable on its own (‘main clause use’)
- typically involves conventionalisation (and possibly constructionalisation) ‘as a main clause’, with (part of) original main clause as its conventionalised meaning

Influence of ‘source’ semantics and grammatical status (2)

Deontic ICCs:

- Influence of ‘source semantics’:
 - construction refers to *potential* SoA → non-assertable
- Grammatical status:
 - interpretable in isolation
 - (un)desirable consequences originally expressed in *q* → conventionalised (and, for wishes and requests, constructionalised) in *p*
 - deontic meanings = typical of insubordination (Evans 2007)

→ **insubordination**

Influence of ‘source’ semantics and grammatical status (3)

Evaluative ICCs:

- Influence of source semantics:
 - construction refers to *potential* SoA or *newly learnt* (i.e. ‘non-internalized,’ cf. Akatsuka 1985) information → non-assertable
- Grammatical status:
 - interpretable in isolation
 - evaluation originally expressed in *q* → conventionalised (constructionalised?) in *p*
 - expressing evaluation = typical of insubordination (Evans 2007)

→ **insubordination**

Influence of ‘source’ semantics and grammatical status (4)

Argumentative ICCs:

- Influence of ‘source’ semantics:
 - not always non-assertable, but non-asserted by speaker (epistemic distance)
 - Grammatical status:
 - reaction to something that precedes → not completely interpretable in isolation
 - ‘conclusion’ originally expressed in q → conventionalized in p
- ➔ **grammatical status = unclear** (to what extent ‘typical’ meaning for insubordination?)

Influence of ‘source’ semantics and grammatical status (5)

‘Conditional questions’:

- Influence of ‘source’ semantics:
 - refers to potential SoA → non-assertable
 - Grammatical status:
 - interpretable in isolation as a question
 - prediction in *q* to be supplied by hearer (no conventionalization / constructionalization)
- ➔ **grammatical status = unclear** (to what extent ‘typical’ meaning for insubordination?)

Influence of 'source' semantics and grammatical status (6)

Modification of preceding discourse:

- Influence of 'source' semantics:
 - restriction of preceding utterance in terms of 'possible worlds'
- Grammatical status:
 - not interpretable in isolation (modifies something that precedes)
 - expression that is modified serves as preceding $q \rightarrow$ not independent, no conventionalisation

→ no insubordination

Influence of ‘source’ semantics and grammatical status (7)

‘Rhetorical’ ICCs:

- Influence of source semantics:
 - *if p* used to assert *p*: epistemic distance cancelled?
 - more research on rhetorical constructions needed, cf. rhetorical questions like *Isn’t that John?*
 - Grammatical status:
 - interpretable in isolation
 - meaning of *q* conventionalized in *p*
- ➔ **insubordination** (BUT to what extent ‘typical’ meaning for insubordination?)

Conclusions and questions for further research

Influence of 'source' semantics:

Conditionality = source construction that is well-suited to express attested meanings:

- evaluation of non-assertable SoA → deontic and evaluative ICCs
- invoking 'given' information but without taking up responsibility for truthfulness (epistemic distancing) → argumentative ICCs
- asking about possible consequences for potential SoA → 'conditional' questions
- modifying preceding discourse in terms of 'possible world restriction' → modification
- ??? asserting identification / predication ('rhetorical' conditionals)

BUT the more conventionalized and constructionalized the ICC, the further away it moves from 'source' semantics:

- deontic and evaluative constructions: conventionalized deontic and evaluative meanings *in addition to* epistemic 'foundation'
- conditional questions and modification: behave like 'typical' conditionals

Conclusions and questions for further research (2)

Grammatical status:

- not all types are instances of same grammatical mechanism
 - deontic, evaluative and 'rhetorical' ICCs: clear instances of **insubordination** (Evans 2007)
 - argumentative ICCs and conditional questions: **unclear** grammatical status
 - modification: **dependency shift** (cf. Günthner 1999b, Verstraete 2005)
- ➔ more research needed on 'boundaries of insubordination' for ICCs (cf. D'Hertefelt & Verstraete 2014 for independent complement clauses)

Thank you for your attention!

sarah.dhertefelt@arts.kuleuven.be

Abbreviations

- COMP complementizer
- COND conditional
- INF infinitive
- INFM infinitival marker
- INTERJ interjection
- NEG negation
- PRT particle
- PRS present
- PST past
- REL relative marker
- SUBJ subjunctive

References

Corpora used

- AGD, *Archiv für Gesprochenes Deutsch*. Institut für Deutsche Sprache Mannheim. <http://agd.ids-mannheim.de/index.shtml>.
- BySoc Corpus, Danish Vernacular. Copenhagen University: LANCHART. <http://bysoc.dyndns.org/index.cgi?>.
- CGN, *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands*. Nederlandse Taalunie. <http://lands.let.kun.nl/cgn/>.
- Collins WordBanks. <http://www.collinslanguage.com/content-solutions/wordbanks>.
- Dolmetschen im Krankenhaus. University of Hamburg. <http://vs.corpora.uni-hamburg.de/corpora/k2-dik/protected/corpus.html>.
- GSLC, *Göteborg Spoken Language Corpus*. Göteborg University: Department of Linguistics. <http://www.ling.gu.se/projekt/tal/index.cgi?PAGE=3>.

References (2)

Literature

- Adriaensen, Kasper. 2010. *Insubordinated if-clauses in English from a typological perspective*. Unpublished MA-thesis, University of Leuven.
- Akatsuka, Noriko. 1985. 'Conditionals and the epistemic scale.' *Language* 61.3. 625-639.
- Auer, Peter. 1996. 'The pre-front field in spoken German and its relevance as a grammaticalization position'. *Pragmatics* 6.3. 295-322.
- Boogaart, Ronny and Kim Verheij. 2013. 'Als dát geen insubordinatie is! De pragmatiek van zelfstandige conditionele zinnen', in Theo Janssen and Jan Noordegraaf (eds.) *Honderd jaar taalwetenschap*. Amsterdam/Münster: Stichting Neerlandistiek VU, Nodus Publikationen. 13-28.
- D'Hertefelt, Sarah and Jean-Christophe Verstraete. 2014. 'Independent complement constructions in Swedish and Danish: Insubordination or dependency shift?'. *Journal of Pragmatics* 60. 89-102.
- Evans, Nicholas. 2007. 'Insubordination and its uses', in Irina Nikolaeva (ed.) *Finiteness. Theoretical and Empirical Foundations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 366-431.

References (3)

- Dancygier, Barbara. 1998. *Conditionals and prediction: Time, knowledge, and causation in conditional constructions*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Fillenbaum, Samuel. 1986. 'The use of conditionals in inducements and deterrents', in Elizabeth Closs Traugott, Alice Ter Meulen, Judy Snitzer Reilly and Charles A. Ferguson (eds.) *On conditionals*. 179-196.
- Günthner, Susanne. 1999a. 'Wenn-Sätze im Vor-Vorfeld: Ihre Formen und Funktionen in der gesprochenen Sprache'. *Deutsche Sprache* 27.3. 209-235.
- Günthner, Susanne, 1999b. 'Entwickelt sich der Konzessivkonnektor *obwohl* zum Diskursmarker? Grammatikalisierungstendenzen im gesprochenen Deutsch'. *Linguistische Berichte* 180. 409-444.
- Hansen, Erik and Lars Heltoft. 2011. *Grammatik over det Danske Sprog*. 3 vol. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.
- Laury, Ritva, Camilla Lindholm and Jan Lindström. 2013. 'Syntactically non-integrated conditional clauses in spoken Finnish and Swedish', in Eva Havu and Irma Hyvärinen (eds.) *Comparing and contrasting syntactic structures. From dependency to quasi-subordination*. 231-270.

References (4)

- Lindström, Jan. MS. 'Conditional and verb-first clauses in Swedish: A constructional approach to a form-function complex.'
- Oppenrieder, Wilhelm. 1989. 'Selbständige verb-letzt-Sätze: ihr Platz im Satzmodussystem und ihre intonatorische Kennzeichnung', in Hans Altmann, Anton Batliner and Wilhelm Oppenrieder (eds.) *Zur intonation von modus und fokus im Deutschen*. Tübingen, Niemeyer. 163-244.
- Stirling, 1999. 'Isolated *if*-clauses in Australian English', in David Lee and Peter Collins (eds.) *The Clause in English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 275-297.
- Teleman, Ulf, Staffan Hellberg & Erik Andersson. 2010. *Svenska Akademiens Grammatik*. Ed. 3. Stockholm: Norstedts.
- Verstraete, Jean-Christophe. 2005. 'Two types of coordination in clause combining'. *Lingua* 115. 611-626.
- Verstraete, Jean-Christophe & Sarah D'Hertefelt. Ms. 'Running in the family: Patterns of complement insubordination in Germanic languages'.
- Weuster, Edith. 1983. 'Nicht-eingebettete satztypen mit verb-endstellung im deutschen', in Klaus Olszok and Edith Weuster (eds.) *Zur wortstellungsproblematik im Deutschen*. Tübingen, Narr. 7-88.